

BILL # HB 2734

TITLE: sex offenders; registration; electronic identity

SPONSOR: Robson

STATUS: House Engrossed

PREPARED BY: Jay Chilton

FISCAL ANALYSIS

Description

This bill requires registered sex offenders to provide law enforcement with any required online identifier that the offender uses or intends to use and the name of the Web site where it will be used. The bill defines required online identifiers as any email address information or instant message, chat, social networking, or other similar internet communication name. The bill also requires the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to maintain a separate search function within the database of registered sex offenders for level 2 and level 3 offenders.

Estimated Impact

The bill is estimated to result in a one-time cost of \$48,100 to \$73,100 in FY 2008 for DPS. One-time costs would include programming to update the database and Web site to comply with the requirements of the bill and revising the sex offender registration form.

In addition to the one-time costs, the bill may increase DPS' ongoing operating costs associated with the maintenance of the database of registered sex offenders and the entry of additional information about each sex offender, although any increase in operating costs is estimated to be minimal.

DPS estimates the one-time cost of the bill to be the same as the JLBC Staff projection. DPS also estimates an increase of \$2,000 in annual ongoing operating costs.

Analysis

There are currently approximately 11,000 registered sex offenders in the State of Arizona. The department expends approximately \$770,000 each year to maintain the sex offender registry. The cost includes 14.5 FTE Positions and all expenses associated with maintaining the databases and Web site, data entry, and verifying sex offender addresses.

There are 2 databases that would require updating. First, WEBFOCUS, which is the Sex Offender Compliance Team's internal database, would require programming to create new fields to allow the input of online identifiers. WEBFOCUS is also the database from which the Sex Offender InfoCenter, DPS' sex offender Web site, retrieves its information, and would require additional programming to send the online identifier information to the Web site. DPS estimates the cost of updating WEBFOCUS at \$10,600.

The second database that would require updating is the Sex Offender Registration System (SORS). SORS is a criminal registration database available to criminal justice agencies statewide and nationally via the National Sex Offender Registry. Like WEBFOCUS, SORS would also require programming to establish fields to allow for the input of online identifiers. DPS estimates the cost of updating SORS at \$11,500.

The sex offender Web site would also require additional programming to receive the online identifier information from WEBFOCUS, to display the information, and to create the search function for level 2 and level 3 offenders as required by the bill. A private vendor created and still maintains the Web site under contract, and DPS estimates the cost to implement the required changes to the Web site to be between \$25,000 and \$50,000.

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In addition to the programming costs for the database and Web site, DPS would have to revise the sex offender registration form to include space for the required online identifiers. DPS estimates the cost to revise the form and print new forms at \$1,000.

Beyond the one-time costs to update the Web site and databases, the bill would result in increased ongoing costs as DPS would be required under this bill to enter additional information into the database. DPS estimates that it would require approximately 116 hours per year to enter this information at an annual cost of about \$2,000. DPS also believes that the modifications to the database and Web site would not result in significant additional ongoing maintenance costs for those systems.

Local Government Impact

The bill may have a minimal local government impact. Sex offender registration is done through county sheriffs' offices. The sheriffs then transmit the data to DPS for input into the database. Under this bill, within 3 days of creating or obtaining a new online identifier, a sex offender would be required to report that identifier and the Web site where it will be used to the local sheriff's office. The sheriff's office would then be required to report the information to DPS. Because of this requirement, there may be a small increase in workload for sheriffs' offices.

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